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ABSTRACT

This paper describes one aspect of a project that resulted in a required, common teacher candidate pedagogy assessment instrument for use by all teacher preparation programs in Washington State. It examines multicultural components embedded in the conceptual framework and instrument and the process leading to this product. It also describes a multicultural pedagogical assessment of teacher candidates as part of a case of high stakes, statewide collaboration. In this study, the Washington Association of the Colleges for Teacher Education interfaced with legislative actions and with the state's Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. The study examined aspects of individual and institutional support for and resistance to incorporation of a transformative multicultural perspective into the statewide pedagogy assessment instrument, noting specific transformative multicultural performance expectations that could be incorporated into the instrument. Examples of transformative multicultural and democratic perspectives that appear in the pedagogy assessment document are included, focusing on: transformative academic knowledge, culturally responsive teaching, low-status/historically marginalized students, and inclusive democratic learning communities. Though there has been resistance to multicultural perspectives, a significant number of Washington teacher educators have welcomed the opportunity to expand their multicultural knowledge base in an effort to help their teacher candidates close the achievement gap. (Contains 30 references.) (SM)

**Incorporating a Transformative Multicultural Perspective
into a State's Policy for Teacher Candidate Pedagogy Performance**

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"When assessment is used to make licensure decisions, tension exists between the goal of excellence and the fact that minimum competency is what is being established."

(Porter, Youngs, Odden, 2001, p. 294)

This paper describes and analyzes an aspect of a project that has resulted in a required, common teacher candidate pedagogy assessment instrument for use by all teacher preparation programs in the state of Washington for individuals seeking a teaching license. Examined are (a) multicultural components embedded in the conceptual framework and instrument and (b) the processes that led to this product.¹ Described is a multicultural pedagogical assessment of teacher candidates as part of a case of a high stakes state-wide collaboration.

The Washington Association of the Colleges for Teacher Education (WACTE), a chapter of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and its members' responses constitute the primary unit of analysis. In this study WACTE interfaced with legislative actions and, more recently, with an administrative unit within the state's department of education – the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) – that makes connections with higher education and community organizations, including the community-based Multi-Ethnic Think Tank (METT) (2001). WACTE is an organization composed of institutional representatives and administrators of 21 teacher education programs in the state that come together to deliberate primarily upon policy issues pertaining to teacher education. The

¹ The State of Washington *Performance-Based Pedagogy Assessment of Teacher Candidates* (draft version 4/9/03) (Washington Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2003) is available as a supplement to this paper.

internal actions of WACTE in this study are understood to have been influenced by the previously mentioned groups: the legislature, OSPI, and METT.

I am a participant-observer in this process. As immediate past-president of WACTE, I had been active in lobbying the legislature against any form of written, standardized teacher testing. In line with the role of a participant observer, I am not a "passive observer" (Yin, 1994, p. 87). As Yin (1994) explains for qualitative case study research, I "assume[d] a variety of roles within the case study situation and...actually participate[d] in events being studied" (p. 87). I am not neutral in this process as an advocate for the importance of incorporating a transformative multicultural perspective into the education of teachers (see Vavrus, 2002b). The perspective of this paper acts on the qualitative research assumption that "reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6), in this instance on how I perceived the processes of this case that have led to the incorporation of a multicultural perspective in a state-wide teacher assessment instrument.

Background Context

Most states require multiple forms of teacher testing for licensure. Tests presumed to measure basic skills, subject matter, and pedagogy are also assumed to be an indicator of a state's or college's quality of teacher preparation. Such testing is seen as one of the primary means to identify and weed out purportedly "low-performing" institutions (cf. Quality Counts, 2003; Teacher Preparation Accountability and Evaluation Commission, 2000).

In this political context the Washington chapter of AACTE challenged this testing assumption and presented testimony over a three year, 1997-99, period to its state legislature in opposition to all teacher testing. Although this effort delayed teacher testing in that state, tests for basic skills and subject matter were enacted into state code. The exception was a

compromise reached with the legislature and other state agencies in allowing WACTE to develop a state-wide "performance-based" assessment of teacher candidate pedagogy. During that time period the state board of education – the agency responsible for accrediting teacher education programs – favored a written pedagogy test. The role of the governor's education advisor, however, was key in WACTE striking a compromise to allow higher education to develop its own pedagogy assessment instrument. This compromise involved WACTE going on record in support of the creation of a teacher standards board composed primarily of teachers, an entity that was opposed by the state board of education because the new board reduced the scope of state board policy making. The WACTE president at that time affirmed in a letter to the governor WACTE's intention to create a performance-based pedagogical assessment instrument of teacher candidates.

The 21 WACTE institutional members unanimously agreed to accept the task of developing a common pedagogy assessment instrument rather than having teacher candidates take a written test intended to measure pedagogical abilities. A WACTE pedagogy assessment committee was formed. Initial membership on this committee was primarily composed of faculty with assessment expertise. During this time early drafts of parts of the instrument were shared with different K-12 professional organizations. All groups supported the notion of the state's teacher education programs having one common teacher candidate assessment form for the student teaching internship and that the instrument would be performance-based.

Independent of this project, OSPI's division for higher education and community outreach had secured a multi-year contract from the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) with the broad mandate to enhance the quality of teaching in the state (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1999). Two of the objectives of that contract matched the project that

WACTE had undertaken. This coincided with the realization that the leadership of WACTE, an organization with no paid staff, had not calculated the actual costs this project would take.

Developing a collaboration relationship with OSPI had been a goal of WACTE and the folding in of the WACTE's development of a pedagogy assessment instrument was the organization's first major step in that direction. The DOE contract administered under OSPI provided necessary funds to contract an external evaluator, support meetings of WACTE's pedagogy assessment committee, and, during 2002, helped finance professional development for teacher education faculty.

A shift in context

A major shift in the OSPI-WACTE collaboration developed when WACTE representatives began to present drafts of the assessment instruments to a consortium committee that had been created by OSPI as part of the DOE contract. In 2000, members of the consortium, including the assistant superintendent and representatives of the METT (see Multi-Ethnic Think Tank, 2001), questioned the validity of the assessment drafts for producing culturally responsive teachers who can effectively close an academic achievement gap generally evidenced between (a) white economically advantaged students and (b) students of color, immigrant children, and students from lower socio-economic families. Besides lobbying for this inclusion, the OSPI DOE contract-funded consortium tied future funding for the WACTE project to WACTE taking visible steps to shift its approach toward inclusion of issues of cultural competence.

An additional change in context was the outcome of a pilot study that used six colleges to determine the validity and reliability of an early draft of the instrument. Feedback from college faculty who supervised student teachers in the pilot signaled confusion over the meaning of multicultural language used in that draft as well as an expressed need to have an instrument

stated more clearly in performance terms with a rubric that contrasted "below standard" with "at standard." By winter of 2001 the WACTE pedagogy assessment committee had expanded its membership to include more OSPI representatives and was beginning anew its search for a meaningful and accurate instrument while remaining mindful that the state was expecting a product to go before the State Board of Education for approval no later than August 2003.

Research Aim and Questions

The juncture at which external lobbying led to a focus on producing teachers who were culturally responsive and were knowledgeable in strategies for closing the achievement gap and when resistance arose to including this orientation in the pedagogy assessment is when my interest in this case deepened and is, therefore, the primary focus of this study. One aim is to determine if a collaborative relationship between higher education and a state department of education can facilitate the incorporation of a transformative multicultural perspective into a state-wide pedagogy assessment instrument of teacher candidates, an instrument with standards that have a high stake outcome because the standards will be a key criterion for determining if an institution recommends a candidate for state licensure. Imbedded in this research goal are two basic research questions that are addressed in the following sections:

- What are some aspects of individual and institutional support for and resistance to incorporation of a transformative multicultural perspective into a state-wide pedagogy assessment instrument?
- What specific transformative multicultural performance expectations can reasonably be incorporated into the pedagogy assessment instrument?

Support, Collaboration, and Resistance

For the Fall 2001 WACTE membership meeting, representative of the METT were invited to speak. Their presentation gave a personal face to the social-psychological devastation that the academic gap has on children of color and their families. Inseparable from the academic achievement gap for the METT presenters was the pervasiveness of institutional racism that is normalized in the daily operations of K-12 schools. WACTE institutional representatives of all of the state's teacher education programs were unanimous in their support of the work of the METT and publicly endorsed METT's call to include in the state's K-12 learning goals language that pertains to culturally relevant learning conditions (see METT, 2001). This was a significant affirmation of cultural competence by higher education teacher education programs which are expected to prepare teachers who can plan and enact instruction in order to help K-12 students attain the state's basic education student learning goals (see OSPI, n.d.).

The METT presentation and the subsequent endorsement by WACTE of METT's goals for cultural competence set the stage for WACTE being more attuned to incorporating substantive multicultural expectations into its drafts of the pedagogy assessment instrument. The reaction of WACTE toward METT presenters, individuals who were also part of OSPI's DOE-funded consortium to enhance the quality of teaching, created a generally positive environment to make the pedagogy instrument culturally responsive. By February 2002 a WACTE sub-committee on collaboration with OSPI met with OSPI officials and determined that our priority ought to be collaboration to revise the instrument for a field test of all the colleges in the state. This was particularly critical because a state-wide in-service training of higher education field supervisors had already been announced for the first two days of May 2002.

Members of WACTE's pedagogy assessment committee were at odds, however, on how best to include a multicultural perspective into the assessment instrument. One committee member expressed the belief that the OSPI consortium had "highjacked" the development process and was not being realistic about program processes for preparing teachers. In March 2003 repeated written requests to include recommended multicultural expectations were not included into drafts of the field test document. Because we were making revisions on an instrument that had been developed by someone outside of WACTE for state pilot of an evaluation of inservice teachers, there was also tension on the pedagogy assessment committee with the creator of that instrument. On the one hand was that instrument's designer and her supporters who tended to hold a status quo, human relations approach to multiculturalism that tends to focus on changing individuals who deviate from dominant social norms so that they can assimilate into existing social structures. Sleeter and Grant (1999) note that an assimilationist approach is how the majority teaching population of whites perceive the role of multicultural education. Underlying this approach was the repeated assertion that WACTE needed to "trust" its members to do the right thing multicultural when historical and contemporary practices of teacher education programs suggested that status quo maintenance was a strong force within programs (see Vavrus, 2002b, chapt. 2). The other alliance of the pedagogy assessment committee, which represented a majority of the committee, were those who held a transformative approach to multicultural education that seeks to change social relations and institutions to overcome discriminatory schooling and societal conditions. That group recognized that "transformation resists white assimilationist conceptions of social change in favor of concern over social justice and equity" and makes "conventional views of U.S. history and educational

practices problematic" (Vavrus, 2002b, p. 7). Thus, a division became visible between a status quo interpretation of multicultural education and a transformative multicultural approach.

By early April 2002 the threat of OSPI cutting funding to the project, including support for the evaluator and inservice training activities, was a real proposition if a tepid multicultural human relations approach was maintained in the field test version of the pedagogy assessment instrument. This led to the beginning of cutting ties with the creator of the instrument previously mentioned by recognizing that her document was in fact in the public domain and by acknowledging her work in a footnote to the observation scoring rubric. Also, during April 2002 an OSPI staff member who had been hired as part of the DOE contract encouraged us to develop an introduction to the field test version of the pedagogy assessment instrument. This introduction, which eventually was folded into the current conceptual framework (WACTE, 2003), situated the pedagogy assessment instrument by noting that it was based on:

- the Washington Administrative Code effective teaching requirements for teacher preparation program approval by the State of Washington Board of Education
- contemporary research related to teaching and learning
- the work of the Multi-Ethnic Think Tank
- the federal law "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001."

The introduction and eventually the current conceptual framework noted, "The assessment instrument incorporates expectations that are in response to state and national concern over an academic 'achievement gap' based on race, socio-economic class, level of English-language learning, and gender" (WACTE, 2003, p. 1). In many regards this was an operational reflection of the endorsement WACTE had given previously to the cultural competence goals that the

METT was calling for. The introduction also outlined a transformative knowledge base as an important conceptual underpinning to the instrument.

Although Governor Gary Locke personally endorsed the pedagogy assessment instrument at an October 2002 WACTE meeting, that same month members of the state's Business Roundtable and certain Republican legislators put pressure on the state superintendent to either "tone down" the introduction or have the whole project eliminated in favor of a written test of pedagogy (Douglas, 2003). In particular, the objections centered on a section in the introduction titled "White Privilege and Color Blindness" that was based primarily on critical race theory from legal scholars (e.g., Crenshaw, 1998; Harris, 1993). In response to this pressure the state superintendent ordered the removal of the pedagogy assessment documents from the agency's web site in November 2002. That same month 100 teacher educators in the state met for an unprecedented one-day meeting titled "Closing the Achievement Gap: A Professional Development Conference for Teacher Educators." Just 2 of the 90 participants made comments in their evaluations that indicated resistance to the pedagogy assessment whereas most comments were positive about the entire day (4.14 average out of a high rating of 5) and primarily were concerned with how implementation of the instrument would unfold.

By January 2003, though, the state superintendent, who initially had negative reactions toward the introduction and its overt perspective as to an underlying racial and material cause of the achievement gap, publicly acknowledged at a winter meeting of WACTE that we live in a "racist society" (Bergesson, 2003). The state superintendent now appears more strongly as an ally to the transformative aspect of this project and has offered strategies to maintain the integrity of the instrument while avoiding political pitfalls that could jeopardize the project with legislators and the business round table. The conceptual framework has been able to maintain,

nonetheless, a section that begins was the following contention: "A teacher candidate represents an outdated dominant cultural model when students are primarily engaged in traditional Eurocentric learning materials and instructional activities" (WACTE, 2003, p. 9). Although overt references to white privilege and colorblindness have been removed as a compromise to keep the project moving forward, these concepts have been maintained in professional development activities for teacher educators.

The field test evaluation that the pedagogy assessment committee received in January 2003 indicated, however, that contention remained over multicultural concepts and terminology, especially from teacher educators who supervise student teachers. In contrast with the reported perceptions on the professional development conference just two months earlier, a common theme among some teacher education faculty indicated that they either did not understand or were resistant to the connection between multicultural education and the closing of the achievement gap. The evaluation also made clear that some teacher education programs had separated the research-based introduction from the assessment elements, confounding the field test by withholding from faculty the underlying explanation supporting the elements.

A source of resistance to a multicultural incorporation has come from teacher educators who view certain disciplines as colorblind and outside the purview of multicultural education. This includes the natural sciences and special education, the former a field disproportionately white while the latter is disproportionately filled with children of color and those from low-income families. Also, large programs have faced resistance as they attempt to orient legions of adjunct supervisors to a new approach that focuses on student learning and lesson plans correlated directly to instruction during student teaching. Another source of resistance that remains comes from some who want a minimalist instrument that will leave program status quo

undisturbed. Additionally, a small number of teacher educators claim that the inclusion of a transformative multicultural perspective acknowledging race is "political" and, therefore, represents a "social agenda" that should be excluded from the instrument.

Current status of project

Based on the January 2003 evaluation of the field test, the pedagogy assessment committee decided to design a comprehensive document so that it would be understood that all parts of the document were dependent on one another and to discourage faculty and teacher candidates from only focusing on the scoring rubric. The committee dropped the title "introduction" and created a "conceptual framework" as Part I of a 4-part comprehensive document. Eliminated was the section on white privilege and colorblindness, as noted earlier, as a concession to avoid derailing the entire project. Added to the conceptual framework were sections devoted to "effective teaching" and "learning targets and assessment." Also included was an attempt to make more overt the academic connections among effective teaching, a multicultural perspective, and classroom management as they related to instructional planning and teaching expectations. Part II became an expanded section on directions for teacher candidates, including a format for an instructional plan. Part III contains the observation scoring rubric. Based on evaluative feedback from the field test an 8-page glossary with a transformative orientation was created as Part IV of the document. The revised document received focused feedback from a special WACTE meeting in March 2003. At WACTE's regular meeting in April 2003, institutional representatives appeared to have accepted the overall document and offered very minor suggestions for revisions. About the glossary one teacher educator, though, noted, "I think cases could be made for other definitions [because] I am sure there are terms from other perspectives which could be used appropriately." As has often been the situation

throughout this project, no specific alternative language was offered by this critic. The document is in the process of being revised to reflect relatively insignificant changes for a May 1-2, 2003, state-wide training of higher education faculty supervisors of student teachers. Further feedback will be taken from those participants who will be using the instrument to critique actual student teacher lesson plans and classroom teaching performance. The final version of the document is scheduled to be prepared by June 1, 2003, for eventual presentation to the state board of education for approval. Proposed language as to how this requirement should appear in the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) when it is brought before the state board of education in August 2003 is still under deliberation with OSPI and WACTE. Academic year 2003-04 is scheduled as an "implementation" year for the colleges whereas it is not until September 1, 2004, that a teacher candidate can be denied a teaching certificate if they are not "at standard" on all elements of the scoring rubric. The implementation year continues to hold opportunities for either maintaining or eroding support for a multicultural and democratic perspective in the pedagogy expectations for teacher candidates.

Paradigm shift in policy and practice

Every version of the pedagogy assessment document stated, "A paradigm shift in Washington and across the United States is necessary for creating an inclusive approach to PK-12 public education that is determined to leave no child academically behind" (WACTE, 2003, p. 1). This paradigm shift drew attention to a policy change that teacher education programs had been under the past 5 years: "The pedagogy assessment emphasizes *what PK-12 students are actually doing and learning in classrooms*. This focus reflects the paradigm shift articulated in the WAC...that requires teacher education programs 'to prepare educators who demonstrate a positive impact on student learning'" (p. 1). Despite this requirement for the past 5 years, some

faculty were resisting a scoring rubric that focused on the effects of teaching on students rather than only observing teacher behaviors.

As profoundly as the shift of focus on student actions and learning was, the identification of multicultural and democratic concepts and expectations for teaching and learning has also required a shift in policy and practices. A new dialogue has surfaced in the state where the issues of race and racism are now legitimate public forum topics and transformative possibilities are being experimented with. The following section provides examples of multicultural and democratic expectations that have been incorporated in all parts of the document, including the observation scoring rubric.

Multicultural and Democratic Incorporation

What follows are examples of transformative multicultural and democratic perspectives that appear in the pedagogy assessment document (WACTE, 2003). It should be noted that as a participant-observer in this project I am the author/editor of the document's conceptual framework and glossary. I also assume responsibility for having included multicultural and democratic expectations in the field test version of the scoring rubric upon which subsequent modifications have been made. Each version was approved by the WACTE pedagogy assessment committee. Subsequent changes were based on evaluative feedback from the field. The substance and the intent of the document through revisions from April 2002 to April 2003 has, however, remained unchanged.

Incorporating a multicultural perspective

The phrase, "multicultural perspective," was criticized by some teacher educators in the field test as vague and, therefore, incapable of being "observed" in teaching. This was after a glossary had been created that included such terms as multicultural education and

multiculturalism (see WACTE, 2003, p. 26) that were based on the scholarship of Banks (1993b, 1993c) and Grant and Ladson-Billings (1997). The original glossary definition given to multicultural perspective came from Grant and Ladson-Billings' (1997) *Dictionary of Multicultural Education* that defined a multicultural "approach" as organization of curricular "concepts around the perspectives of different ethnic, gender, socioeconomic, and ability groups, and curriculum [that] is culturally responsive to the culture, language, and learning styles of students" (p. 175). Based on feedback and research that often finds whites focusing on definitional issues when they believe their racial privilege is in some way threatened (Vavrus, 2002b), the glossary and conceptual framework needed to be made even more explicit. Making cross-references to terms in the glossary, the following statement was added about a multicultural perspective: "An inclusive orientation that is manifested in instructional planning and the classroom environment through the interactions of *caring, culturally responsive teaching, a learning community, democratic classroom management, multiculturalism, multicultural education, and transformative academic knowledge*" (WACTE, 2003, p. 26). Also added to the glossary was Nieto's (1997) definition stating that a multicultural perspective is evident when educators

explore alternatives to systemic problems that lead to academic failure for many students[;]... [A multicultural perspective] fosters the design and implementation of productive learning environments, diverse instructional strategies, and a deeper awareness of how cultural and language differences can influence learning. School reform with a multicultural perspective thus needs to begin with an understanding of multicultural education with a *sociopolitical context*. (p. 389)

Teacher educators who presume that political neutrality exists in schooling processes tend to resist overt acknowledgements such as Nieto's that multicultural perspectives are informed by U.S. socio-political contexts and how these same societal dynamics are played out in K-12 classrooms.

Objections were similarly voiced to defining multicultural education as a "total school reform effort" (Banks, 1993b, p. 6) because, it was argued, teacher candidates are only responsible for a classroom of students, not an entire school. To counter this false dichotomy that critics of multiculturalism forwarded, the following explanation was added to the conceptual framework:

Whereas a teacher candidate's focus is on classroom instruction and not necessarily on school reform, the planning and teaching practices of a candidate from a multicultural perspective can contribute positively to a school's climate for multicultural inclusiveness and support. For example, when a teacher candidate integrates multicultural subject matter content into the curriculum, a candidate is involved in a multicultural knowledge construction process with and for students. When practicing an equity pedagogy, a teacher candidate is also reflecting a multicultural perspective when trying to reduce classroom prejudicial social discriminatory behavior among students. (WACTE, 2003, p. 8)

This clarification as to how a teacher candidate's classroom practices do contribute to "school reform" merged Banks' (1993c) dimensions of multicultural education into teacher planning and actions.

The following are examples of how the phrase multicultural perspective is incorporated into the pedagogy assessment observation scoring rubric:

- Requirement for the instructional plan:
 - √ "Construct learning targets that are central to the disciplines of study; meaningful, important, accurate; and incorporate a multicultural perspective" (WACTE, 2003, p. 18).
 - √ "Provide evidence of a multicultural perspective and interdisciplinary connections with other subject areas" (p. 19).
 - √ "Describe how instructional methods, curriculum, and assessment incorporate a multicultural perspective and are culturally responsive to students of color, immigrant children, and students from lower socio-economic families" (p. 21).
- "At Standard" during instruction:
 - √ "Students use learning materials and engage in learning tasks that incorporate a multicultural perspective" (p. 21).

- √ "Students demonstrate mutual respect through listening to and expressing divergent, multicultural perspectives" (p. 21).

Transformative academic knowledge. Further clarifying what was intended by a multicultural perspective, the inclusion of transformative academic knowledge (see Banks, 1993a) in a teacher candidate's lessons is required. The conceptual framework section notes, "A multicultural perspective in teaching and learning uses transformative academic knowledge that includes viewpoints representative of people of color, immigrants, the poor, and those who work for gender equity" (WACTE, 2003, p. 8). Because some teacher educators perceived that this kind of knowledge base was irrelevant for classrooms composed of predominately white students, a sentence was added that explained transformative academic knowledge inclusion was important "*regardless of the demographic composition of a teacher candidate's classroom or school* because all students in this diverse democracy need to develop cultural competence based on the inclusiveness that a multicultural perspective can provide" (p. 8). This expectation is made operational in the observation rubric:

- Requirement for the instructional plan:

- √ "Include transformative, multicultural academic knowledge (rather than only additive content)" (p. 21).

The conceptual framework makes clear that transformative academic knowledge calls for alternatives to the predominance of Eurocentric knowledge bases as the organizing principle for the school curriculum.

Culturally responsive teaching. Inherent within a multicultural perspective are classroom conditions that include culturally relevant and responsive teaching and learning. The pedagogy assessment uses Gay's (2000) articulation of culturally responsive teaching as

instruction that uses "the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming" (p. 21). Added to this definition in response to objections that Gay's explanation purportedly lacked clarity, was Gallego, Cole, and the Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition's (2001) finding that culturally responsive teaching supports "empowering forms of acculturation and teacher-student relations based on collaboration rather than coercion" (p. 982).

As noted earlier, instructional plans are required to be cultural responsive to students of color. Another expectation includes the following:

- Requirement for the instructional plan:

√ "Use multiple approaches to learning, including those that are culturally responsive" (p. 19).

Although this may appear as redundant, this case study confirms the necessity of stating multicultural expectations in a variety of forms in order that such requirements are infused and reinforced throughout teacher candidate requirements.

Low status/historically marginalized students: One of the most controversial phrases in the pedagogy assessment document is the identification of "low status/historically marginalized students." Based on Cohen's (1994) research, students are considered "low status" for their academic competence and are, therefore, regularly excluded from learning opportunities or simply treated as a discipline problem. The purpose of this focus is to help teacher candidates attend to those students – often identified as "low status" – who tend to make up the lower end of the achievement gap. Those teacher educators who objected to the use of the phrase for its

pointedness generally wanted instead the substitution of "all students" or simply "students." This change was made for the "at standard" observation whereas the references to low-status students was kept for "below standard" performances and in the instructional plan requirements. One possible explanation for this aversion the low status identification is that it goes against an educational mythology held by many educators that all students treated equally and teachers do not label students despite evidence to the contrary. In a certain regard the whole schooling system is called into question as an equitable institution by acknowledging that such students continue to experience historically-based academic discrimination.

The following are examples of how the phrase low status/historically marginalized student is incorporated into the pedagogy assessment observation scoring rubric:

- Requirement for the instructional plan:
 - √ "Design strategies that engage low-status/historically marginalized students" (WACTE, 2003, p. 18).
 - √ "Provide evidence of how lessons will develop critical thinking and problem solving skills of students, including those considered low-status, historically marginalized" (p. 18).
 - √ "Create learning opportunities for students to work individually and in different group arrangements, including heterogeneous groups that build and recognize academic competence for low-status/historically marginalized students" (p. 19).
- "Below Standard" during instruction:
 - √ "Low-status/historically marginalized students are rarely engaged in opportunities to learn concepts in the instructional plan" (p. 18).
 - √ "Low-status/historically marginalized and special needs students are rarely engaged in learning opportunities" (p. 19)
 - √ "Low-status/historically marginalized and special needs students rarely receive teacher support to demonstrate academic competence" (p. 19).
 - √ "Low-status/historically marginalized students are disproportionately disciplined in comparison to other students" (p. 20).

- ✓ "Low-status historically marginalized students are rarely included in learning community tasks that foster their active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interactions" (p. 21).
- "At Standard" during instruction:
 - ✓ "Students are engaged in opportunities to learn concepts in the plan (p. 18).
 - ✓ "Students receive teacher support to demonstrate academic competence (p. 19).

Inclusive democratic learning community. The pedagogy assessment instrument makes overt the relation between the classroom environment and academic achievement. Classroom management expectations are framed within conditions conducive for an inclusive democratic learning community. The conceptual frameworks states,

In order to engage all students, especially those traditionally assigned low status, a teacher education program and its PK-12 partner schools need to help a teacher candidate create a democratic learning community that includes and welcomes all students and places a positive value on the academic competence and intellectual ability of every student. (WACTE, 2003, p. 10)

Creating a welcoming classroom environment that encourages the academic engagement of students is sometimes beyond the capacity of a student teacher intern who is a guest in a teacher's classroom. Hence, a need existed to clarify in the pedagogy assessment document the importance for both a teacher education and the cooperating teacher's school to aid a teacher candidate in the creation of conditions that are conducive for learning. Classroom management of this orientation is characterized by democratic and caring relationships (see Dewey, 1916, 1938/1974; Noddings, 1992, 2001). Classroom management expectations in the observation rubric are expressed in the following ways:

- Requirement for the instructional plan:

- √ "Use strategies to create an inclusive, supportive learning community" (p. 19).
- √ "Provide a clear outline of management tasks and methods of monitoring students that are democratic and caring" (p. 20).
- √ "Describe how knowledge of students and students' community are used as frameworks and supports for activities, resources, and learning strategies" (p. 21).

Many of the previous citations regarding a multicultural perspective, culturally responsive teaching, and low status/historically marginalized students inherently overlap with the conditions for and outcomes from a democratic learning community.

Emergent Explanations to Multicultural Resistance

To understand the phenomena of this case study, I offer emerging explanations based on this experience, my experience as both a teacher education faculty and administrator for 20 years, socio-political realities of our current era, and a review of critical literature around issues of multicultural education (see, e.g., Vavrus, 2001, 2002a, 2002b).

Resistance to multicultural perspectives is a function of:

- A significant number of people, especially those who are whites, in positions of educational leadership – including many within teacher education faculty and administrative ranks – who consider themselves colorblind and neutral and, therefore, see as irrelevant issues of race and racism.

This position then leads to the following sources of ideological belief that underscore their resistance:

- Racism is an historical artifact that is only manifested through aberrant individuals rather than a regular experience for many children and youth of color.
- Schools and classroom are sites of fairness, not of institutional racism
- Eurocentric curricula are superior academic experiences.

- Academic achievement is independent of cultural histories for even those whose regularly experience forms of subordination through racism.
- Low-achieving students come to schools with knowledge deficits and lack academic competence to succeed.
- The source of student academic failure rests with the family and community, not the learning environment of the school and a teacher's disposition toward differences.

These ideological assumptions held by many educational leaders has had the following effect:

- Significant numbers of white teacher educators avoid issues of multicultural education because issues of race create discomfort for them and because they lack a multicultural knowledge base. Teachers, therefore, tend to defer and act on ideological colorblind belief systems that are the common discourse in their schools.

These are not necessary new explanations, but they do help to explain why resistance continues to be manifested toward inclusion of a transformative multicultural perspective into the pedagogy assessment of teacher candidates.

Conclusion

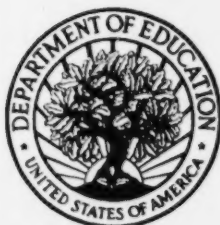
Nevertheless, a significant number of teacher educators in Washington state have welcomed the opportunity to expand their multicultural knowledge base in an effort to better help their teacher candidate close the achievement gap. As one white teacher educator stated to me recently, "I didn't realize that we were doing such a terrible job until I attended the [WACTE-OSPI sponsored] inservice." Most programs are moving forward in making curricular adaptations in anticipation of the official implementation of the instrument by the state. The degree to which these changes will promote a multicultural-across-the-curriculum approach to closing the achievement gap is yet to be seen.

The importance of collaboration with the state agency responsible for education can not be underestimated in the process of making significant changes that affect teacher candidate licensure eligibility. For the politically thorny issue of seeking the root of the academic achievement gap and making state rule changes, higher education lacks the political influence to act alone. A collaboration such as the one that has been built in Washington has required significant commitments of time for both OSPI and WACTE. Within this collaboration dialogue that builds mutual understanding and trust has been critical. The process is not without its difficulties. The potential outcome, however, of having a cadre of future teachers who can begin to close the academic achievement gap continues to be worth the time and effort.

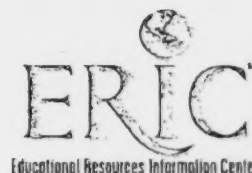
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